

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<u>Project Name:</u> Eggebrecht Break Request	<u>Proposed Implementation Date:</u> April 2012
<u>Proponent:</u> Brian Eggebrecht 8270 US HIGHWAY 191 S Malta, MT 59538	
<u>Type and Purpose of Action:</u> Brian Eggebrecht has requested to break 129.09 acres of expired CRP land on State lease #6860. The previous CRP contract expired on September 30, 2011 and the acreage was denied re-enrollment. He wishes to utilize the expired CRP acreage for small grain production in the future.	
<u>Location:</u> S2SE4, NE4SE4, SE4SW4 of Sec. 29 - Twp. 30N - Rge. 28E	<u>County:</u> Phillips

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	<p>The proponent, Brian Eggebrecht, has submitted a break request in writing to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The request will be reviewed per DNRC land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod.</p> <p>FWP was solicited for comment on February 21st, 2012. Scott Thompson, Region 6 Wildlife Biologist, responded on March 9th, 2012. Mr. Thompson's comments were considered and are attached.</p> <p>NRCS and FSA administered the former CRP contract, and they require the lessee to follow specific conservation guidelines to remain eligible for future farm programs and payments. These agencies may or may not be involved in the future management of the land proposed for breaking.</p>
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: Grant the proponent permission to convert 129.09 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover to annually planted small grain crops.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny the proponent permission to break 129.09 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS
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	<p>N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)</p>
<p>4.GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</p> <p>Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>89.7% of the soils present are Class III soil types and 10.3% are class IV soil types. These soil types are well suited for farming. According to the USDA's, Soil Survey of Phillips County, this group of soil types is capable of producing a 36 bushel/acre crop of spring wheat on average. The proponent holds other State land agricultural leases, and he does an excellent job managing the soil in terms of erosion control on those leases. It is anticipated that he would manage this tract under the same management principles and erosion would be very minimal.</p> <p>Action: The proposed project is not anticipated to impact the geology or soil characteristics.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</p>
<p>5.WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>Annually planted small grain crops would utilize the soil's available water similarly to the present tame grass stand.</p> <p>Action: The project is not anticipated to impact the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface water.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</p>
<p>6.AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>Air quality is high in this area and the project would not have a negative impact on it. Pollutants and particulates from machinery used to produce the small grain crops would be produced.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to air quality are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to air quality will occur.</p>
<p>7.VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any plant species of concern or any species of potential concern. The present tame grass stand (crested wheatgrass and alfalfa) would be broken up and small grain crops would be annually planted and harvested.</p> <p>Action: Vegetation cover would be converted to annually seeded cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present in the current stand of vegetation.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>8.TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</p> <p>Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>The tame grass stand is utilized for nesting cover, resting cover, bedding cover, and shelter by the area's wildlife. The area is utilized by upland game birds, deer, antelope, small mammals, and other various birds and non-game animals. The removal of this type of cover will reduce nesting habitat; however, the annually planted stands of small grains would provide limited cover and a food source during certain times of the year.</p> <p>Scott Thompson, Region 6 Wildlife Biologist for FWP, commented that he was against breaking this acreage because it provides nesting habitat for upland game birds and receives use by deer throughout the year.</p> <p>Action: Nesting cover for upland birds currently provided by the existing tame grass stand would be removed. No other impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</p>
<p>9.UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (NHP) lists 6 fish species, 1 bird species and 0 plant species as either species of concern or potential species of concern within the project area's township. The 6 fish species would not be impacted by this action because it is not located near any bodies of water. The bird species is the Short-eared Owl, and it is considered a "Potential Species of Concern". The Short-eared Owl's primary habitat is grasslands and the proposed action would remove some of the species potential habitat. The bird's distribution covers nearly 100% of Montana and it has one of the largest distribution areas of any of the owl species.</p> <p>The removal of 129.1 acres of grassland habitat would not directly impact this species.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.</p>
<p>10.HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>The acreage proposed to be broken was previously farmed and does not contain any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical,</p>

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	archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.
11.AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	<p>The land surrounding the project area consists of a mixture of agricultural, grazing, and CRP lands. The project area is not near any prominent topographic features, no excessive noise or light will be produced, and it is not visible from a populated or scenic area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.</p>
12.DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	<p>Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.</p>
13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	<p>Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>Returning the expiring CRP acreage to agricultural production would increase the area's small grain production.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to industrial and commercial activities are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities and production will occur.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.</p>

<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action: The proposed action may slightly increase tax revenue from revenues generated through the production and sale of small grain crops.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services will occur.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>The area proposed for breaking is publically accessible. The current stand of tame grass is healthy and fairly dense; it is likely utilized by the public for hunting whitetail deer, mule deer, antelope, and upland birds.</p> <p>Action: Hunting opportunities for the public to pursue whitetail deer, mule deer, antelope, and upland game birds on this acreage would remain, but the quality would likely be negatively impacted from removing the tame grass stand. No other impacts to recreational or wilderness activities are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles will occur.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: /s/
Matthew Poole (Land Use Specialist)

Date: March 19, 2012

IV. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Highest and best use of the land is small grain agriculture. NO significant impacts were identified by breaking of the property.

27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☐ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By: R. Hoyt Richards Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

 /s/ Date: April 6, 2012
Signature